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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001076

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/24/2015

TAGS: [CY](#) [TU](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#)

SUBJECT: USG SHIP VISIT TO CYPRUS: WEIGHING THE COST

REF: A. NICOSIA 0304

[1](#)B. 2004 ANKARA 6615

[1](#)C. IIR 689801035

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric Edelman, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: A USN ship visit to the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) at this time (ref A) would have a negative impact in Turkey. The Turks, including the military, will interpret a visit now (post-April 24 referendum) as support for Papadopoulos and a slap at the Turkish Cypriots. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Reftel provides Embassy Nicosia's analysis of the impact of a ship visit to the ROC on Greek and Turkish Cypriots. We provide below our view of the likely impact in Turkey of a USN ship visit to the Republic of Cyprus.

What to Expect in Turkey

[1](#)3. (C) Turks in general have the perception that the Turkish Cypriots have received almost no benefit from voting for reunification and a solution this past April. They see Greek Cypriots, on the other hand, as having paid no price for having voting against it. They view any U.S. or EU actions on Cyprus through that prism.

[1](#)4. (C) A USN ship visit would likely redirect toward the U.S. Turkish ire currently aimed mostly at the EU. After our recent trade delegation to the north, which engendered significant good will, there is broad recognition we have tried to pursue a positive course. A ship visit to the south will wipe that out, and will be perceived as a USG slap in the Turkish Cypriots' face.

-- This perception will be exacerbated by the Turks' long-standing objection to Greek Cypriot "closure" of the north's ports.

-- Our Cyprus policy has been a welcome exception to the recent wave of anti-Americanism in Turkey (ref B); a ship visit would put that at risk.

-- Albeit wrongly, Turks will perceive the visit as support for Papadopoulos. Any Greek Cypriot gloating over the visit will receive prominent media coverage here, to our detriment.

-- A ship visit would also revive popular speculation and conspiracy theories about the U.S. desire for bases on Cyprus at a time when they had finally died down.

-- Ref C suggests that a ship visit to Cyprus could also damage navy-to-navy relations.

[1](#)5. (C) The only potential ameliorating factor could be portraying the visit as the continuation of a normal pattern of visits. Unfortunately, as we understand the circumstances, there has been no port call to the ROC by any significant USN ship since September 11, 2001. The visit of a seagoing tug and a few off-shore submarines do not create the necessary patterns. This would prevent us from employing this counter argument.

Marmaris Maritime Festival

[1](#)6. (C) We understand that one option that has been under consideration would be to have the ship participating in the Marmaris International Maritime Festival conduct a follow-on visit to Cyprus. This would be problematical. The Turks deny entry to aircraft whose previous or subsequent destination is the Republic of Cyprus. They will likely have the same policy with a USN vessel, necessitating at minimum an intervening port. The Turks will view as USG deception a subsequent visit to Cyprus by a USN vessel that previously participated in the Festival, regardless of any intervening port.

[1](#)7. (C) Comment: Our summary judgment is that a ship visit to the Republic of Cyprus at this time will have a significant negative impact in Turkey. End Comment.

EDELMAN